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A RATIONAL CODE
OF
SEXUAL ETHICS

BY

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY THE EDITOR

INTRODUCTION

THE FUNDAMENTAL BASIS OF MORALITY

MASTURBATION

ILLICIT SEX RELATIONS

EXTRAMARITAL RELATIONS

THE DOUBLE STANDARD

DIVORCE

ALIMONY

UNNATURAL METHODS OF COITUS

HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS

INCEST

PREVENCEPTION

ABORTION

PROSTITUTION

ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN

THE HOME

CONCLUSION

FOREWORD BY THE EDITOR

I sent out a questionnaire on Sexual Ethics to a number of liberal-minded people. I presented to them a number of problems which confront the modern man and woman and asked them to give me their frank opinion as to how they would solve them. I asked them to answer frankly and honestly or not at all. If for certain reasons they did not care to write their honest thoughts under their own names they could write pseudonymously or anonymously. The best and most complete essay that has been received is the one that I take extreme pleasure in publishing herewith. I bespeak for it a careful reading. Those who are not familiar with the liberal viewpoint on many of our vexing sex problems will find that viewpoint well presented in this essay.

vi FOREWORD BY THE EDITOR

I did not send the questionnaire to reactionary theologians masquerading under the guise of sexologists, nor to those extremists who suffer from a sex complex. Neither the former nor the latter can help us in solving the sex problems which confront ninety per cent. of mankind.

—W. J. R.

A LIBERAL CODE OF SEXUAL ETHICS.

INTRODUCTION.

IN any discussion one has always a desire to know to what extent the writer may have looked into his subject and upon what study and experience he bases his conclusions. This is a proper desire and it is unfortunate that we have too great a tendency to accept any plausible solution if only the proponent displays sufficient confidence in his own opinions. There is also a tradition whereby we assume that if the writer has a sufficiently wide reputation in some branch of learning then his authority must apply equally in a field to which he may be even more of a stranger than his reader. It is indeed to be regretted that we are not more critical of our authorities. The professor of mathematics *may* know a

great deal about the industrial problem provided he has made a fair and unprejudiced examination of it, but his doctorate in mathematics does not carry any weight in reference to the industrial problem. It is a common jest that the professor can not add correctly and also his opinions on labor may be merely those of a not too humorous mortal preplexed by the problem of keeping a cook.

In a similar way physicians are supposed to know all about sexology. One need confer with very few to discover that their actual knowledge is usually confined to obstetrics and in sexology they are often as ignorant and as bigoted as a fanatical clergyman. Neither has looked up the literature which modern sexology has produced and his opinions are little more if as important, as those of any good natured policeman.

Not that I would insist that no one may speak who has not studied his Havelock Ellis, Ellen Key, Grete Meisel-Hess, Bloch and Freud. "Out of the mouths

of babes and sucklings" one often gets, if not an illuminated opinion, at least a natural and often commonsense one. But that occasional pat remark of the wholly uninformed is hardly a sufficient reason for accepting all such remarks as valid. It seems unfair to make a presumption in favor of ignorance or to assume knowledge in this field merely because the speaker is known to have a good training in some other. It seems only just that any one who chooses to write on sexual problems should have studied at least the writers mentioned above. And he will be still far from justified in being dogmatical even if he has supplemented his reading with first hand sympathetic and humble observations of his fellow men. Given a sufficiently quick sympathy, some humility, and a not too easily nauseated delicacy, he may if he can win the confidence of his fellows learn much upon which he may base some tentative conclusions. But in the presence of almost any definite problem, though he may be willing to sug-

gest, certainly he will never presume to command. Nor will his judgments far exceed in definiteness the Nazarene's reference to the first stone.

The present writer makes no claim to authority. He has studied his problem over a good many years and has a fair working knowledge of what has been discovered by other students. He has had some, perhaps unusual opportunities to get at the motives and impulses of his fellow men. But in every case where he writes "it is obvious," or "it is true" the reader is quite justified in supplying the word "seems." All I can do is to bear witness according as my study and opportunities in life have led me to some answers. Whether this answer applies to my neighbor's problem I can not say. To me it would seem worth a trial, but in this field there are no immutable laws, no precise rules everywhere applicable, and Alas! no panacea. Nowhere do I find any substitute for faith and charity.

THE FUNDAMENTAL BASIS OF MORALITY.

"Virtue is the mean between the vice of excess and the vice of deficiency."—*Aristotle*.

" . . . but so engrained in the human heart is the desire to believe that some people really know what they say they know and can thus save (us) from the trouble of thinking for ourselves" . . . "Indeed I can see no hope for the Erewhonians till they have got to understand that reason uncorrected by instinct is as bad as instinct uncorrected by reason."—*Samuel Butler*.

The Editor has submitted a series of questions on sexual ethics with the request that they be answered frankly, without dodging any unpleasant issues. To this discussion the writer is glad to contribute those views which a somewhat liberal experience with the hearts of his fellows has evoked. And not only does he wish to be frank, he feels it a duty to write without regard to his personal tastes or prejudices. Nor would it be fair to write merely in accordance with what one be-

lieves to be "proper reading" for his fellow mortals whom we in our vanity always assume to be less developed spiritually, less well self-controlled than our own unusual selves. Indeed one of the chief reasons why most sex discussions are futile is that we hypocritically assume that we may allow ourselves a good deal of leeway, not to say downright sin, but that our neighbor must be carefully watched and limited not only in his actions, but that even the facts of life must be carefully censored before they are presented to him lest he draw too free conclusions and so go astray. As the Arabs say when a shareef (a descendant of Mohammed) is observed violating the tradition: "such things may be all very well for a saint, but they are not good for an ordinary man." Few are really conscious of this pose, but a little introspection will discover it in the best of us.

Nor can one always be free from mere covetousness. We may not like to admit the fact but I fear that is the correct de-

scription. None can plead 'not guilty' to Butler's jibe at those who: "Compound for sins they are inclined to by damning those they have no mind to." We do that all the time and never so fervently as in matters of sex. We refuse to see that most of our moral indignation, our self-righteousness, has no better foundation than the determination to see that our neighbor does not enjoy those pleasures which we openly condemn, secretly covet, but in which either our opportunities or our moral cowardice prevent us from indulging. Delude ourselves as we may, the fact remains that we do covet every bit of pleasure in this weary old world. And when a man is struggling with an unsatisfied libido—and which of us is not?—he may be expected to resent any indication that others are more successful than himself. So it comes about that nowhere do we indulge in so many rationalizations, so much self-deception as in problems of sex. Nowhere do we have so complete an arsenal of pious disguises with which to

conceal the malicious selfishness of our dirty little hearts.

It is not my intention to try to lay down a system of ethics.

No *system* of ethics has as yet been developed which will do much more than indicate a general direction towards which its originator felt we should move in our effort to increase the happiness of the race and equally of the individual. In fact ethical systems have usually satisfied no one but the proponent and have been of very little assistance in solving the concrete problems which we meet in daily life. No matter how illuminated the author, his system always fails to meet the requirements in practical application. Shaw's remark about the Golden Rule is quite sound. However right may be the idea of doing to your neighbor as you would he should do unto you, the literal interpretation usually placed upon that admonition needs to be corrected for the case where your neighbor's tastes are different from your own. In other words the system

while useful as indicating a possible direction of advance is always to be modified according to the requirements of the particular circumstances.

There is the further difficulty in ethical discussions that the participants therein seldom understand from what point the discussion started or to what end it hopes to proceed. With that in mind I wish to indicate approximately the starting point of my own notions.

I am unable to accept asceticism as an end, as in any way desirable in itself. It may at times be good discipline for such as *voluntarily* adopt it, though this is often not the case. But that it has any virtue in itself is denied. Let me illustrate: We often see a person who sacrifices his whole chance for happiness in life in order to take care of his parents. Sometimes his parents are worthy folk, sometimes they are thoroughly worthless. Tradition says a person should care for his parents in their old age and it is customary to praise highly those who make

the great sacrifice sometimes demanded. Now of two such cases one person goes ahead living a sometimes horrible life and yet grows spiritually, becomes more kindly, more useful socially. As we say he keeps sweet and happy through it all. But in another similar case the victim grows morose and bitter. He carries his burden loyally but with a complete loss of all the qualities which are desirable either for himself or for society. Both have been thru the same furnace, both are supposed to receive the same reward, at least at the hands of their neighbors, and yet one was spiritual life and one spiritual death and putrefaction. As I understand it, the main difficulty lies in the fact that the first person voluntarily accepted his burden. His parents meant so much more to him emotionally than anything else the world had to offer that his trials were accepted cheerfully. In the second case the sacrifice was never voluntary, however much self-deception the victim may have indulged in in an

effort to reconcile himself to his erroneous sense of duty. The result was correspondingly bad. In other words, discipline and self-denial are only permissible when the object sought is emotionally a sufficient object for the person in question. Asceticism, self-denial, can be and frequently is as unethical as uncontrolled self-indulgence. Therefore we will not consider in this place the deductions made by the traditionists on the assumption of divine or near-divine revelation.

I shall assume that man is an animal, even a beast if you like, with all which that assumption implies. I assume that he needs to live the life of a good healthy beast with probably a number of requirements which a good animal may get along very well without. On the evidence of the bio-chemists I must accept that a man's thoughts and emotions are determined partly by his physico-chemical reactions, by his metabolic level, as reacting on his accidental environment. In doing this I neither affirm nor deny the existence of

what the traditionist calls the spirit. I shall even speak of the spirit, using the word in its popular sense without committing any one as to its exact meaning and limitations. In time, no doubt, the chemists will be able to write out the physical and chemical reactions for my views say on the First Cause, or the tariff. When that day arrives we can adopt a more precise nomenclature, but until then it will suffice to use the old word without implying any particular limitations.

In this discussion we are also assuming the Freudian hypothesis as to the nature of the mind and its reactions. However incomplete that hypothesis may be it has led to the establishment of a number of vital facts in the matter of sex and its manifestations. We assume with Freud that the basis of all activities is the desire for pleasure, and that speaking of "purpose," divine or other, in relation to sex is to miss the main source of action and close the eyes to some most important facts. It is immaterial for our purposes

BASIS OF MORALITY 19

whether we divide human instincts into nutritional and sexual or whether we lump them all as the libido. To me the distinction seems difficult and not very illuminating. The evolutionist necessarily goes back to the elementary forms of life in his study of behavior and in its simplest manifestations it is quite arbitrary to discriminate between the various so-called instincts. For example: does an amoeba eat in order to grow large enough to reproduce, i. e., divide? Or does it find its bulk interfering with its nutrition or excretion and so divides, i. e., reproduces, in order to be able to eat? In passing one is reminded that perhaps the amoeba runs away from some marauding Vampyrella not more in response to the "instinct of self-preservation" than because it is unpleasant to have its toes nibbled. In other words it is entirely possible to interpret the amoeba's behavior on the basis of pleasure seeking without making any assumptions or placing any limitations on the amoeba's possible

psyche. We have no proof that the lower organisms are essentially different from ourselves, tho we have indications that they do not need some capacities which we seem to possess. And the assumption that man acts as he does because it is more pleasant to do so is entirely in accord with our observations on his primitive ancestors.

This point might seem irrelevant in discussing practical ethics, but as a matter of fact the break between the traditionist and the more or less scientific student of ethics occurs usually at this point. To the traditionist seeking a *purpose*, usually a divine one, in all activities and with a definite prejudice against pleasure, the criteria of ethics rest upon certain conventions, tribal or theological, and all cases are judged by their approximation to these conventions. Such a code is much too inelastic to meet the daily requirements of mankind and a tremendous amount of quite useless and unnecessary suffering results.

BASIS OF MORALITY 21

From my viewpoint pain is a thing to be obviated wherever possible. The object of sound ethics would seem to be rather to render mankind as happy as may be possible, a procedure which implies continuous compromise and reconciliation of divergent interests. Whatever skill we use in making the needful compromises we can be sure that we will never attain to a really just or reasonable solution. One can but do his best with the facts as he meets them. Of one thing we can be sure and that is that in even our least successful efforts in the way of consciously adapting our instincts to the rights of others, we will cause infinitely less harm and suffering than we would by trying to stretch each case to fit the Procrustean bed of ascetic tradition.

As a legacy from the old ascetic dogma we have in large measure not recovered from the idea that sex was shameful, filthy, and disgusting. This tradition makes it difficult for many to realize that for good physical and spiritual health a

more or less regular exercise of the emotional nature is necessary. The fact that certain persons are alleged to have remained chaste thruout a long and useful life,—and a wise man accepts such statements with several grains of salt,—should not lead to the absurd inference that all mankind can or even should undertake any such regimen. It is far from established that mankind as a whole would be better or happier for any such procedure. It may even be doubted whether mankind would survive a generation of such colorless and strained existence. We now have ample proof that most of the nervous wreckage is due to a faulty adaptation, misunderstanding or denial of the sex life.

In the good old days it was usual to attribute much nervousness to sexual “excesses” and the literature of even to-day is full of much well meant rubbish written on this erroneous basis. I do not say that such writers were conscious hypocrites, but few were self-critical enough to

discover that they had mistaken their personal tastes for the laws of nature. None seems to have known himself or his neighbor intimately enough to realize how difficult it is to define excess. No one will deny that excess of anything is or ought to be injurious, but we now know that we can not define excess except with reference to a particular case and even then a wise man will not be dogmatic. When we learn to discriminate between the results of excesses and the disturbances which a *fear of such results* induces we may be able to advance a little past our present method which is purely one of trial and error. Meanwhile one can not do better than to urge a moderation which we very wisely refuse to define. For example Luther's "zweimal in der Woche" gives us Luther's requirements, and they seem about average, but that is all. It would be bad ethics, since it would undoubtedly lead to disaster, to advise a couple to follow Luther when their actual requirements were three or five times as great.

We shall assume in the discussion which follows that force and deceit are ethically inexcusable. The right of the individual to the control over his own body is in these matters not to be infringed. Nevertheless it is worth noting that while one cheerfully condemns coercion—which tradition allows as ethical in the married state—there are frequent cases where our condemnation fails to hit the mark. One can not approve seduction with its train of miserable consequences, neither can one be dogmatic about it.

For example: many women like to be physically dominated by the male, a few like to be more or less tortured. A satisfactory emotional release can not be secured without it. It is of course recognized that this quality is honestly inherited from our animal ancestors. In these cases the use of force is ethically sound because it is desired. Probably many cases of alleged rape originated in the inability of the far from judicially minded male to distinguish between a protest which is real

and one which is merely meant to heighten the general necessary excitement.

Equally it is unwise to condemn off-hand the aggressor in cases of seduction. The phenomenon has to start somewhere and usually both parties are more or less responsible. If complaint is made it is all too frequently not because the male was impertinent but because when it came to a show-down the woman lost her nerve. The following case presents some food for thought. A youth and his girl are carrying on a commonplace flirtation which ends in both losing their heads. Then (most unusual) the lad lost his nerve (he thought he had regained his moral control) and refused to carry the performance to its natural culmination. Now a good girl should have admired the lad for his fine strong moral character and his care of her. Her intuition was, however, sound for she recognized that it was a case of "cold feet" and she would have no more to do with the poor boy. This same lad who was very popular with the girls

repeated this performance with another girl with the same result. The girls were not girls who were loose at all, but apparently they were hot-blooded and once having decided to let themselves go they could not regard their squeamish partner as any man at all. Well?

This case leads naturally to a very common problem of the adolescent. Is it right to be *first*? It seems to be universally accepted among the conscientious that there is no harm in "taking a slice off a cut loaf." I have no answer for this problem but submit a few points which tho they be mere expedients may be worth considering. It will be granted that under present conditions, if a girl can reach marriage with an intact hymen (assuming that she had one to begin with) she will be able to dodge some of the problems which her more robust sister must solve. But where the girl is naturally hot-blooded and can not "be good," the course for a conscientious man would seem fairly clear. He can, of course, organize his

will power and refuse to lead the willing victim astray. But this merely leaves the thing for some other less scrupulous man to do. Would it be wise if the man met the requirements and then saw to it that the girl was properly instructed as to how to care for herself, how to protect herself against unscrupulous men? It is admitted that it is difficult, under present conditions, for a woman "who has sinned" to keep her self-respect, to realize her right to sexuality, and upon this fact the unscrupulous men play with great advantage and for wholly selfish ends. For that reason the solution suggested above has some advantages since the alleged conscientious man can and usually does see to it that the girl is properly educated and supported morally until she can see herself in proper perspective and feel sure of herself. Certainly if it were my daughter or sister I would prefer her to be a self-reliant and wise person rather than to have her develop the infinite petty meannesses which starved sexuality produces,

or that brassy cynicism which is so common in the faces of the girl of loose morals. There is no universal solution, but the one offered seems likely to produce less degradation and sorrow than the usual traditional ones.

To the Freudians more than any other we owe the frank announcement of what most people have dimly realized but have lacked the courage to express in words; namely, that the regular exercise of the sexual impulse is essential to good moral and physical health. We are just beginning to understand that it is no mere physical pleasure which is "all good enuf in its way but not essential." We begin to see that it is not a mere physical gratification which is involved but that it lies back of all we do and irradiates all of our activities. For there is much more to it than the physical side, absolutely necessary as that is. Our whole mental life is involved in the psychic disturbances of a proper intercourse and is refreshed and invigorated precisely as are our bodies.

This school of psychiatrists have driven home the fact that this impulse can not be smothered, nor dammed back with impunity. Much of it can be transferred to so-called higher creative, as opposed to procreative, cultural aims, but always there remains an irreducible minimum varying with each individual which must have full satisfaction and in its own way if disaster is to be avoided. For it is now clear to any one who will look into the evidence that our policy of suppression merely deforms the impulse which then appears in any of an infinite number of anti-social forms. This deformed impulse poisons not only the soul of the owner but spreads its poison thruout the community.

The whole energies of some men and a great many women are taken up in the vain struggle to control or even suppress altogether this, their strongest impulse. Some may win a victory but at most it is a barren one; at its worst it means lifelong invalidism or even insanity; while for the

less fanatic it produces envy, malice, and a generally dyspeptic spiritual condition. In all cases an unenlightened attempt to control tends towards introversion, some form of auto-erotism, which greatly weakens the individual's attempt to develop himself into a useful social animal, while weakening the capacity for those strong sane interdependencies which we so much need to strengthen because without them the stability of the home becomes seriously endangered. Thus a person who has learned to content himself with substitute gratifications in this, his strongest impulse—however desirable some of these substitutes may be socially—may marry and establish a home, but the tie is weak and in the stress of even a good domestic life may readily be broken, leaving the victim to revert to his former methods of gratification.

On the other hand a conscious and unashamed devotion to the proper exercise of this impulse makes for a kindly, independent and charitable life much more

free from the hideous and vulgar perversities of our current virtue. For a man or a woman whose libido is properly understood and gratified—and this means much more than mere physical exercise—is free to devote the rest of his energy not only to the improvement of himself but also of others. The properly developed person is free as no one else can be to sublimate the better part of his sex impulse for the benefit of his kind. He is free from that covetousness of which we have spoken and can deal both honestly and charitably with his less fortunate fellows. Whereas those who are struggling with an uninformed and unsatisfied impulse are responsible for most of the misery in this world. One living a complete and healthy life views charitably all human folly. The deformed see in the Biblical dictum that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children, an injunction to see to it that no innocent child escapes.

All of this does not argue for an uncontrolled sexuality, for the morals of the

barnyard—tho just where we get the assurance to slur the morals of the animals is not quite clear to me. Far from this usual criticism, it argues for a fully conscious control of the sex impulse and a shaping of it to meet natural ends, not the artificial aims which certain ascetics have promulgated out of their deformed and tortured desires. At present we strive half-heartedly for an unconscious control without knowing what we are trying to control or to what end. If we do follow thru the logic of our code we ought in honesty to admit that we do not desire any such goal for ourselves. The usual result of our efforts is a compromise according to which we profess adherence to the code; we are exceedingly cruel to any who may be suspected of violating it; and we sneak about in the darkness to secure whatever compensations we think we can secure without getting caught. Indeed there is a distinction between setting our ideals some distance beyond what we hope to achieve and in not really believing in those ideals.

Nor can one hope to strive successfully for ideals whose implications he does not understand and in which he does not wholeheartedly believe.

Therefore we will assume with the Freudians that the function of sex is not even in major proportion a question of procreation. Where procreation is desired the ethical problems become relatively simple, or can become so. The vast majority of sex problems are those where procreation is not the object, in fact becomes a disaster. Hence we shall be speaking of sexual relations under the assumption that suitable measures are taken to prevent conception unless that is desired. Our interest here is rather with those other functions of the sexual impulse whose neglect and denial has wrought and is still wreaking such havoc with our civilization.

Self-control: This is the stock reliance of those who strive to repress or even to eliminate the sex impulse, and that in defiance of the plain indications of man's

animal origin. To any suggestion as to change or loosening the bonds such reply: let him control himself. And indeed one is even called upon to observe how splendidly and by inference easily the exhorter controls all low desires. Somehow one grows suspicious of a virtue which is given to vainglory and boasting. One recalls that the great moral leaders were as a class rather humble. But this expression, self-control, is bandied about as if it meant something. I wonder just what it does mean?

No doubt a case can be made out for this much praised virtue. Nevertheless there seems to be a side of the question which is seldom mentioned and never discussed. Looking back over what little we really know of man's development we may hastily deduce that his rise—if indeed it is a rise—has been directly proportional to his mastery over his primitive predatory instincts. This idea is rather flattering to one's vanity, since one finds himself here at the peak of moral grandeur, a free, self-

controlled spirit and the universe is bid bow down and admire.

A little critical introspection rather shakes the foundations of this pride. A man finds himself attracted by a pretty woman. If he is honest he recognizes the temptation. Why then does he not yield? If he resists he feels remarkably and childishly virtuous and usually boasts much of it. But really is it self-control? Candor will force him to admit one of two explanations of his conduct. Either he was cowardly and feared the consequences, or he had other sources of pleasure which meant enuf more to him that he was willing to forego this temporary liaison. I suspect that had we any way to measure the man's reactions quantitatively we would find that "morals" was the least important factor in determining his conduct. I reach this inference from the fact that if the temptation is really strong, or, which amounts to the same thing, the sexual impulse is strong, the man yields. This fact,

this unfortunate lack of control is amply attested by many a proverb.

When we seek the actual means whereby men are controlled we get back to the notion of pleasure seeking. We find that above all precepts lies the determining factor that one does what he does because he finds it more pleasant than otherwise. And we see clearly that our developed self-control is based largely on substitute gratifications, sublimates or what not. We have diverted these old impulses into other and socially more useful channels and in so far as we have succeeded in so diverting them, we have acquired self-control. This is precisely what happens in the training—i. e., civilizing—a child. It is often folly to spare the rod, but it is indeed a greater foolishness to omit the development of a system of rewards and substitute pleasures which will make it worth the child's while to act in a less antisocial manner. For if law and force could civilize then would our horrible prisons be even a more desirable part of one's education than the school or

college. For in these one has to be good. But we know very well, even if we decline to admit it, that neither law, nor prisons, nor military discipline have any civilizing value per se. The victim will be good as long as the master stands there with the rod, and once relieved from fear of the master he "steals back" as much pleasure as he can.

Each of us is a prisoner in the social organism, and our old primitive impulses are prisoners in our hearts. We may seek to dominate this prisoner by force as the moralists would do, and we will fail miserably as we always have done. The psychiatrists appreciate now what suffering and immorality result from this attempt at blind forcible control. We also can try to understand what the forces are which we wish to control and the means whereby such an overlordship can be acquired. That mastery which is real, which is serene, and not subject to tragic and unexpected breakdowns is not built upon ignorance and coercion. It results from a

proper realization of the problem and a conscious adaptation of the individual to his requirements. It was a wise priest who said that one could not hope to save souls when the object's belly was empty. Neither can we hope to adapt ourselves intelligently and successfully in the sexual sphere unless we have satisfied that irreducible minimum of the impulse which can not be sublimated. This fact is patent to most folks after the honeymoon. For the traditional blindness of love is the maniacal delusion induced by sex hunger.

And so, as it seems to me, the problem can not be solved by morals. It must be attacked with full consciousness of what it is we are trying to control, how far we ought to control it, and how to sublimate the major portion of it. We can not do that in ignorance, nor can we lay down laws for general use. It is always an individual's problem, to be solved by him. We can help him by letting him have the facts, by giving him living conditions wherein there is a minimum of unneces-

sary strain after bread and butter, and an education which places the objects upon which the impulse may be sublimated within his reach. At present we do none of these things.

If I make myself clear I mean that I do not believe there is such a thing as self-control in the sense in which the moralists use it. It ranks with the delusion of free will, a useful term but not a reality. And instead of this purely negative and worthless attempt to compel obedience I desire a conscious adaptation. I have no fear but that the result will be an improvement.

Our assumptions seem to be:

1. The fundamental criterion by which all conduct is to be judged is its total output of happiness. Unnecessary suffering like unnecessary disease is a crime and immoral.

2. No hard and fast rules can be laid down. Each case must be judged on its merits.

3. The prime essential in all sex relations is that all parties thereto must know

what they are doing and be willing so to do.

4. Force and deceit are morally reprehensible and the community may properly exercise control over such attempts. Much discretion must be used in passing on such incidents.

5. Sex is neither filthy nor holy, it is merely natural and essential. The impulse is immensely more than mere physical gratification. Its complete satisfaction is necessary for good mental and physical health. To be properly satisfied the nature and implications of the impulse must be understood.

6. As far as concerns the individual, procreation is a very minor incident in his real sex life. Desirable as the experiences of parenthood are for the development of the individual, they yet constitute a proportionately small part of his total sex life. Whatever "purpose" sex may have in the universe, to the individual it is a pleasure-seeking which has most important effects

BASIS OF MORALITY 41

upon the individual; and it can not be suppressed or crippled without most disastrous effects to all. What it needs is not blind control but conscious direction.

THE INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS.

We will now take up the questions posed by the Editor.

1. MASTURBATION.

It is usual to treat this subject with an amount of moral indignation which should put the speaker on guard lest he betray himself. Our assumptions imply that where the person does not injure himself or his future offspring there is no ethical problem involved. Any harmless pleasure which one can achieve is his right. The literature up to within the last ten years was without exception delightfully violent in discussing this subject. Indeed, so heated does the lecturer become that one suspects not only the zeal of the newly converted, but even a transfer for energy from other sources. In some ways it seems about as apt for the well-married to rail

against masturbation as for a New England spinster to become frenzied over cannibalism. In both cases it is a perfectly safe field in which to vent any pent up emotions which one dares not release in connection with their real origins. But is masturbation really injurious? With as much care as I am capable of, I have not been able to reach any definite conclusion. That excessive indulgence should be injurious is obvious, but what is excessive? Anyone who can reach the necessary degree of intimacy with his fellows quickly learns that the German sexologist was not far wrong when he asserted that "nine men masturbate and the tenth man is a liar." Of course there are exceptions, but most of these are hardly men. And the practice begins with the awakening of the sexual instinct, often very early in life, and continues with a frequency depending upon the libido of the person until normal relations are established. The oft repeated charge of unnaturalness is voided by the fact now fully

recognized that animals deprived of normal gratification masturbate. (We are tempted to go astray in considering animals, due to the fact that most of the observed animals retain their periodicity, that is have stated periods of rutting, whereas man has lost his and is in a continuous state of rutting.) This unfortunate development of the human race—and it is one which the domesticated animals have partly acquired—renders our attempts to set “natural bounds” rather futile.

We must also recognize the fact well established by Stekel that even where the individual does not consciously indulge in this substitute gratification, he does so unconsciously. All of which being true, what does it matter? Here again we must judge by results and with great caution not to mistake cause for effect. As a matter of fact, modern students are slowly coming to regard the whole question as relatively unimportant and where excessive masturbation is noted to regard it as

a symptom of more deep lying disturbances. We no longer worry about the loss of a "vital fluid" since this occurs both in marriage and with emissions and it is not "vital" anyhow. We do realize that the exhaustion is a matter of nervous excitement, and it is still undecided as to whether masturbation or coitus is the more exacting in this regard.

The effect of early masturbation—by which writers seem to mean that of early adolescence—is still emphasized, but one recalls that the pioneers, that superb stock, married very young. Marriage at 16 to 18 years for men and often at 13 for girls, yet they survived somehow and our young men of today make out fairly well. One injury I have seen clearly and that was the injury due to the fear of injury. Once that fear was allayed the individuals settled down into steady and healthy citizens, altho they did not diminish the frequency of indulgence appreciably.

In the absence of any definitely ascertainable injury we may dismiss the sub-

ject as a matter of personal taste. It is not a thing one would advise ordinarily, and yet not without its usefulness when we consider that the alternative is to make normal intercourse possible. It is ethically neither a crime nor a vice,—merely an undesirable misfortune. Personally I am unable to see the ethical beauty of keeping a lad so exhausted physically by overwork that he is sexually impotent. It may be a wise solution, but in my experience the victim usually makes up for it by an insensate “bust” once he has a chance.

2. ILLICIT SEX RELATIONS.

Procreation is not here involved. The birth of a child is distinctly a concern of the community, but it is very doubtful to what extent the powers of the state should be allowed to interfere seriously in a matter of such intimate nature. It follows from our assumption that intercourse is necessary and desirable, that ante-marital intercourse is decidedly proper unless we are prepared to arrange for very early

ILLICIT SEX RELATIONS 47

marriages. This does not deny the possibility of restraining the sexual impulse somewhat during adolescence, neither does it argue for promiscuity. The latter is a product of the conflict between our ascetic traditions and the uninformed, not to say ignorant, healthy impulse. It has its roots in deceit and hypocrisy, the economic condition, and largely in the undeveloped state of our emotions. Lacking any proper appreciation of the real nature and high values of sexual love we tend to drift into a mere promiscuity, a mere physical relief.

As far as men are concerned it is a condition and not a theory which we have to face. It can be safely assumed that practically all men have indulged in intercourse long before they reached an economic freedom which permitted the establishment of a home. It is true that there are occasional exceptions, as very few men do reach marriage in a state which in females we designate as *demi-vierge*. But even so conscientious a student as Robert

Michels admits that while he would much prefer that his daughter's husband might come to the nuptial couch as pure as his daughter, he has thus far met no chaste man to whose gentle mercies he would care to trust a dearly loved daughter. As things stand at present in our social system, a "chaste" man over twenty-five years of age—and who can hope to marry earlier than that?—is simply no man at all. He will be appreciably inverted or sexually impotent. Such chastity rests not on great moral self-control, as the victim deludes himself into thinking, but upon a distinctly deficient sexuality. That does not mean that he may not be a nice fellow, be quite refined, and even socially useful, but as the pilot for so storm-tossed a bark as the good ship matrimony, he is not entitled to a pilot's license. Indeed, it is doubtful whether he will be able to pilot a dory on the calm waters of a mill pond. And it is borne in upon every thoughtful student that Freud was right when he said that a man who will accept substi-

ILLICIT SEX RELATIONS 49

tutes in this, his strongest, impulse will accept substitutes in every other department of life. That does not imply that a second or third rater can be transformed into a real man by indulging in promiscuous intercourse, far from it, but he is merely a sexual cripple, often very useful in his sublimated activities but entitled to no special honor for his great self-control which really rests on the absence of any compelling urge. Such a man may marry and if he chances upon a wife equally indifferent he may establish a home, and the result may be entirely satisfactory; but should he marry a normal woman, there will surely be much to regret for all concerned.

These facts being true, or at least so they seem to me, our ethical problem concerns not intercourse but the probable unhappiness which may result from the conflict between our traditions, laws, and the natural expression of the individual. This is all very "materialistic," but men are so and we must make the best of it. Obvi-

ously couples indulging in illicit intercourse must do so in such manner that the future rights and possibilities for happiness of either party are in no way injured. At present it is very difficult to meet this requirement, especially as regards the woman. But if both parties are fully aware that they have a right to this happiness and enter into the relation with a proper appreciation of the difficulties, if both are satisfied as to their rights, it is difficult to see wherein it is anybody's business what they do. There is always a possibility that the woman may become strongly attached to her lover and dislike the inevitable parting. But this also happens when intercourse is not involved, and as far as I can see is merely an unpreventable misfortune. When we find an answer for the one case it will be equally valid for the other. Unrequited love is indeed a very sad occurrence; but that is all we can say about it; love can not be compelled nor can a pretense be long

ILLICIT SEX RELATIONS 51

maintained which deceives any but the neighbors.

One does not pretend to justify the course of a man who flits from one woman to another, leaving a train of broken-hearted maidens behind him. Such conduct has been amply damned for millenniums, but where both parties are entering freely into such a relationship I see no ethical grounds for objection, any more than in any other relations between friends. Of course, such a proposition will offend those who worship in intentional blindness of facts the ideal of one man for one woman for all eternity—a rather long period during which to maintain a complete indifference to all one's fellow mortals. It will offend those who preach a strict monogamy without realizing what a strict monogamy implies. Nevertheless, it is a position which is biologically sound, properly handled makes for spiritual growth and that, too, on a firmer footing than the conventional ideal which applies perhaps to one couple in a thousand. To

render this solution unnecessary involves a change in our social system which few are willing to undertake. It does involve a frank recognition of what is now an established fact, and a corresponding sanitary renovation of our age-long prejudices and hypocrisy.

The chief difficulty lies in the unwillingness of men to allow to their co-equals, women, the same rights which they claim for themselves. This in all justice we must do. It is long past time when we should try to maintain this age-old iniquity. Somehow it seems to me that the traditional insistence on "purity" in the woman is based in practice on very degrading grounds. Of all men, those who insist most stridently on marrying a virgin are those who have been notoriously profligate and wholly indifferent to the sacrifice which they have compelled from their victims. This attitude is inculcated in the minds of all our boys. To me this seems criminal. A woman may have all the qualities which we admire in women,

ILLICIT SEX RELATIONS 53

be equipped to maintain a splendid home, but forsooth she has not an intact hymen and so is to be treated as an outcast. If however, she have an intact hymen, even tho that be maintained on a basis of frigidity or perhaps tribadism, then is she perfect in the eyes of tradition and a suitable wife. I can not believe that the modern woman will permit herself to remain long under such tawdry disabilities. The only cheerful note in this situation, and that is cheerful only in that it is such excellent irony, is found in the case where a notorious roue finding a woman whom his seductive wiles will not warm up, marries her and discovers that he has obtained an iceberg. True, much unhappiness follows, but in a way one gets a grim smile out of old Mother Nature's little joke.

I am not here pleading for promiscuity. There is a world of difference between so-called illicit relations undertaken in response to natural stimuli, and where all of the qualities of friendship and comraderie

are involved and the fly-by-night relationship which promiscuity implies. I am unable to see why a couple who like each other should not be free to learn by experiment whether they care to unite for purposes of procreation or otherwise. Nor do I believe that this great freedom would result in a greater looseness of morals. As far as men are concerned I do not see how they could well be more lax than they are, but I can see how they might be cleaner and nobler in their affairs. I can believe that in a state of frankness those higher qualities which rest on the sexual relation might even develop to a point where we would find ourselves in a better and kinder world. Would it not mean a great many more happy homes if a greater freedom of choice and more experience entered into the foundation of them? And a home that is not happy poisons everything that comes in contact with it.

Under present conditions illicit intercourse often carries in its train results which are ethically bad because of the

EXTRAMARITAL RELATIONS 55

failure of the parties concerned to meet the situation frankly, but there are obvious signs that this condition is about to pass; and when it does, not only will men be cleaner lived but they will also have to act more like gentlemen if they are to receive any attention at all from the emancipated female.

3. EXTRAMARITAL RELATIONS.

This phase of the subject is to an even greater degree than others complicated by the clash between tradition and common sense. If, as sometimes happens, both the wife and husband can agree as to such a relationship being established it is difficult to see that any one else is called upon to interest himself in it. Where such an agreement can not be reached it is obvious that divorce is the natural and proper remedy. Of course where there are children, and especially under present conditions, proper provision must be made for the deserted party. At the same time experience teaches that the deserted party is

often consciously to blame for the situation and must pay the penalty. If the wife suffers from a frigidity which the best efforts of both can not overcome, then in all reason she must regard herself as incompetent and act accordingly. The fact that it is physically possible for a wife to produce children even though she has no sexual life, does not seem to me to alter the sound legal position which allows a wife to secure a divorce if her husband is impotent. It is merely carrying over into the emotional sphere a principle which applies in the physical. One who knows what a degraded emotional life is led by wives who are congenitally unable to rise to their husband's sexual requirements will look with friendly eyes on a much greater ease of divorce. Neither party has a right to turn the other away merely because a mutual mistake has been made. On the other hand neither has the right to imprison his mate for life in the round of petty meanness and quarreling which ill-adapted sex relations produce. It is

EXTRAMARITAL RELATIONS 57

always possible for a sensible woman to decide whether she cares enough for her husband to desire his happiness and so release him in those situations where she can not serve without a feeling of moral degradation. The same reasoning applies to the man. If he can not so win his wife's affections that no other man can exert an overwhelming attraction upon her, he must confess frankly that he is a failure. It may be a severe wrench to his vanity, but as a lover he has to decide whether he will be content, with those qualities and the corresponding quantities of affection which his wife can give him, leaving her free to fill the vacancies elsewhere, or he can withdraw and set her free. As to children, we will discuss their status when we come to divorce; but I believe that we may say that children have no place in an unhappy household.

It is usual to wink at transgression on the part of the husband. This custom originated with the men and for their own convenience. On the other hand it is held

that because of the legal and property rights of her children the wife must remain true to her husband "regardless." That seems a rather materialistic basis, but in this case it is applied by the traditionalist as a valid argument. With the abolition of inheritance, a reform which is now getting under way, this old shackle will be broken to the very great advantage of all concerned. It promises a great ethical advance when the economic dependence of woman shall have been abolished and women are free to dictate the terms under which they will live even as men have always done. For the extreme cases where either party is unable to maintain a monogamous relation, it seems to me that if they can not make a satisfactory compromise, they must part. I recall cases where deception has been practiced by one party or the other with a general increase in happiness all around and that social and spiritual gain which is an outgrowth of contentment, but one does not feel called upon to formulate any rule for

THE DOUBLE STANDARD 59

these extreme cases. One does very well if he attends to his own problems and exercises much charity when examining the solution which others find for theirs. When one stops to consider how impossible it is for him to realize the emotional value which his neighbor sets upon the different phases of the love life, it seems foolhardy and cruel to try to establish rules which all others must follow.

4. THE DOUBLE STANDARD.

Should the standards be the same for (a) boys and girls? (b) for adults? Under present conditions the answer is a much qualified No. As long as an intact hymen is regarded as the chief essential of a bride, it is expedient, though hardly a matter of ethics, to endeavor to bring the girl to nubile age in a state of physical intactness. With that alleged third of womankind who are congenital icebergs this will present few difficulties and no doubt the parents can feel quite proud and happy about it. Some of us doubt the

bridegroom will be quite so well pleased as he had thought. It is said that a young girl's love is a wonderful and beautiful thing. I do not presume to deny it. If it is beautiful to live in a kind of hypnoidal state destitute of the criteria of reality, then the point is conceded. As near as I can ascertain, a girl's love is about as beautiful as the new-fallen snow, about as easily sullied and turned into slush, or, what is worse, a whining self-pity when the disillusionments of the honeymoon arrive. Just how beautiful all that is remains a matter of taste, but perhaps a little less naiveté would wear better. It seems to be universally conceded that it is a misfortune if the "girl love" is not replaced by "woman's" love by the end of the first few months of married life. Of course this peculiar psychic condition of the bride is tremendously flattering to the man's vanity, and under cover of it he is able to dissemble a multitude of iniquities. But would not a little clearer vision be better for all concerned? Would it not

THE DOUBLE STANDARD 61

facilitate the development of that sturdy self-reliant candid affection without which marriage easily degenerates into mere habit?

Of one thing I feel quite certain and that is that men would be better off for a more candid view of the matter. Our present tradition inculcates so firmly the idea that a woman who gives her body has also degraded it that men often experience a feeling of disgust even with their brides. One feels that the opposite view is not only more expedient but also more just. It would be better to teach our boys that when a woman gives her body she has given her greatest proof of confidence and trust. Surely such trust should be repaid by a heightened respect.

As to the boys, we have already noted that we have to choose between masturbation and fornication. Of the relative healthfulness of the two, opinions will not greatly differ. It would seem that where the normal relation is developed naturally out of the boy's "calf-love" it can lead only

to better things. When we compare this natural development with the tawdry initiation which many lads receive I do not see how one can decide in favor of the latter. For it is well known that the first intercourse always sticks in the back of the mind and by it all subsequent experiences are judged. If this first experience was a tawdry, obscene, rather disgusting affair, we may be sure that that vision will always be pushing in between the man and his beloved. To me, that seems undesirable; but barring an extreme and, as far as I have observed, infrequent self-control, the choice lies as above.

(b) The standard for men and women should be the same and quite free. They should meet on a basis of equality and self-respect. If they can not, and it is usually the woman's misfortune that her training has made it impossible, then she may indulge in whatever expedients she finds available to her case. I do not ignore Freud's keen remark about some neurotics: "that they would have been

THE DOUBLE STANDARD 63

better had it been possible for them to have been worse." Many women of this generation are so bound by tradition that freedom is beyond them. Such will have to conform, and if need be become bitter old maids (or wives): a general nuisance to themselves and every one else. One hesitates to call such moral. Nor do I doubt that with the development of equality and economic independence there will be less promiscuity than at present. I believe that once women are really emancipated, *liberated* men will have to improve both their manners and their ideals if they are to have companions. The immorality of the usual code at present lies rather in the inability of women to feel sure of themselves. They accept all too readily the man-made notion that in leading a natural sex life they have degraded themselves. Men foster this view for purely selfish reasons in that it enables them to escape their full emotional responsibility. The sooner we abolish that the better.

5. DIVORCE.

From what has preceded it is obvious that divorce should be made as free as possible. If it must be regulated other than by public opinion, it would seem sufficient that on the request of either party a decree of separation should issue. After a suitable and not too long interval, if the plaintiff was still determined to separate, then a final decree should be issued. And it should be wholly unnecessary for either party to prove that some blame or breach of law had been perpetrated. It is absurd to require two persons, presumably intelligent persons, to live together in a state of mutual hatred until one or the other is willing to furnish "cause." I am unable to see why people should live together if they do not wish to do so. Nor can I believe that the State would suffer if they separated. I am quite sure that the community would not. Nor can I see why "blame" needs be shown. It is familiar to all of us that it is quite possible to keep

one's companion in a continuous homicidal state of mind without violating any of the laws or even conventional politenesses.

The usual objections to divorce other than the theological claim that marriage is a sacrament, are based upon a desire to maintain the integrity of the home. It is usually called sanctity but integrity is what is really meant. And there is good reason why we should desire that children grow up in a good and complete home. The analytic study of the child's mind shows clearly how very important the first four or five years are in determining the future possibilities of the child. Equally important are the years up to adolescence, though in both periods the really important things have been almost wholly left to chance, so great is our disinclination to face the actual facts of child development. But analysis shows more. If it emphasizes and confirms our opinions as to the importance of a good home, it also shows the disastrous effects of a bad one. We have gone on in the blissful delusion that the

child did not understand and therefore our numerous iniquities would not affect its development if only we kept up a pretense "for the sake of the children." We know better now. Not only does the child sense the dishonesty of a divided household, it acquires extraordinary and perverse ideas of even our proper activities. If the children's good is to be the deciding factor in matters of divorce, then we must unquestionably allow the separation of those who can not live together and grow together. Better half a household with honesty and peace than any number of homes full of strife. These late developments in analytical psychology confirm what many of us had already observed: that children who came from homes in which dissension reigned always seemed crippled in their emotional capacities. They are never able to believe in those finer loyalties upon which fine spirits depend. It is not denied that children can survive in a quarrelsome household, but

that does not prove that they should be compelled to do so.

There are plenty who can say: "No, I don't believe we had an ideal home, but we made out somehow and I wouldn't give up those experiences for anything." And to all such one can extend that warm human sympathy which goes out to the honest effort, the honest confession of failure. They tried faithfully according to their capacities and one has only kind words for their effort. We do not propose to break up any homes, though occasions arise even now where the state does feel justified in so doing. But it is one thing to praise these conscientious failures and another thing to insist that persons without the moral strength to see the thing through shall be shackled together to act as a focus of infection poisoning themselves, their children, and the community. Give them another chance: sooner or later they will find suitable mates. In the second attempt there will be less of that much heralded "girl-love" and less "calf love,"

but there will also be a great deal more common sense, and after all that is what is required to pilot a family safely into port. For those who never were meant to establish a home and rear children, the quicker they perish from the racial stock the better, perhaps. In any case all we need to do to render them socially valuable—whatever value they may possess—is to give them their preceptives and leave them alone.

6. ALIMONY.

It is difficult to imagine a fine spirited woman asking for alimony without a feeling of degradation as though she were some indefinite sort of prostitute. On the other hand the learned judges have decided that marriage reduces a woman's value, and limits her chance of securing another husband—all this in spite of the market quotation on grass-widows! Fortunately these same judges have properly enough decided that in so far as a wife contributes to the home work as essential

and often more exacting than that of the man, she is entitled to some form of remuneration in case she finds it necessary to withdraw from the firm. This decision, doubtless reached at a time when the wife was a producer as well as a wife, is fundamentally sound and under present conditions must be accepted. But so great have grown the abuses of this system, so blasphemous the extortion which certain kinds of parasitic women indulge in, that one feels the need of some radical change in the basic conditions upon which the courts shall proceed. At present the economic and social dependence of women make the solution very difficult. When we progress far enough that the community takes over as it should the support of mothers, a marriage contract which looks to the protection of the children will probably suffice. In the transition period we should arrange for more discretion on the part of special domestic courts where with all the facts before them the judges, or commission, can adjust the financial details with less

regard to precedent and more to justice in the particular case. If married couples could be divorced promptly and without the absurd necessity of proving "guilt" as at present, I believe they would separate before the accumulating hatreds and petty spite made a reasonable division of the estate impossible by agreement. Such agreement confirmed by the Commission should be final. Paradoxical as it may seem I am convinced that free and easy divorce would result in many more happy homes and in many fewer divorces. Until that time comes I suppose we must tolerate the parasitic wife and professional extortionist as we tolerate those upon whom she preys.

7. UNNATURAL METHODS OF COITUS.

This subject really calls for no lengthy discussion. As long as both parties to the relation are content I can not see how it is anybody's business just what procedure they find most successful with them. It is not a legal matter at all. Of course, if

HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS 71

the wife, for example, feels disgusted with her partner's tastes, and he on his part can not alter them, there is no reason why the two should remain together. In fact I doubt if any but a few ascetic theologues have any particular interest in the matter. We have to admit that some of the most desirable citizens we know have what seem to some rather weird notions of pleasure, but where both are agreed, no psychic nor physical harm is going to result. We have also to admit that these so-called unnatural methods are very common in the stress of passion and doubtless quite useful. If the end sought—the maximum contraction and complete and satisfying detumescence—be achieved I see no reason to limit the methods chosen as long as both partners are willing and content.

8. HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS.

Here again the word un-natural obscures a relatively simple problem. As a matter of fact the relation is unnatural only in that it is not usual. The homo-

sexual tendency is present in all and its sublimations constitute some of the most advanced spiritual activities of the race. The gross physical facts are common to animals as well as men. I seriously doubt the Freudian explanation of the phenomenon, that is, as a complete and sufficient explanation. And I also doubt the success of the reputed cures. I suspect that this phenomenon rests primarily on the physico-chemical balance of the individual, and that while such a person may be led to indulge in the so-called normal relations, the cure is more a perversion of a pervert than an actual deep-reaching change.

Whatever the future may bring to light in the matter of cause and cure—assuming that a cure proves socially desirable—the ethical problems do not seem unanswerable. Certainly with adults who may choose to entertain such relationships I can see no reason why others should concern themselves about it. Nor do I feel sufficiently sure of the facts to be dogmatic

HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS 73

where, as sometimes happens, the relationship is established between adults and adolescents, nor that it is a matter which can be wisely subjected to legislation.

It seems to me that better results will be achieved by making it customary to ask a mental examination of persons who seem to be going on irregular pathways. Only by such examinations can we hope to find a solution which will do any practical good. To imprison a homosexual, or a sadist, does not make any change in his psyche, at least no change for the better. The better grade homosexual is often a highly useful citizen and can ill be spared. The low grade are not to blame for their tastes and often would be found fit for some sort of restriction in their movements. With the record of the old comradeships of Greece and Japan before us one may doubt whether our present treatment of the subject does not suffer quite as much under the theological tradition, and with as great wastage, as our other sex conventions. From the evidence

thus far, it seems a subject worthy of more serious and open minded consideration than it has yet received, in this country at least. I can not see that as applied to adults it is a community affair, since homosexuals left to themselves do not breed and thus eliminate themselves from the stock. Forel's comment on bestiality might be applied here with some propriety. He said, and it scandalized the unguided: that it was better for an idiot to copulate with a cow, which would not injure the cow than for him to copulate with some girl and beget a family of idiots. It seems certain that in the near future our laws concerning all of these "queer" practices will have to be revised by a group of open minded psychiatrists with the intent that when any action is taken it shall have some effect. At present no law even if enforced makes other than a slight and temporary change in conditions.

On the other hand I have wondered whether the Freudian concept of fixation might imply that a number of homosex-

uals, border line cases, do not have this fixation confirmed in adolescence due to their difficulty in securing opportunity for "normal" intercourse, because of their lack of "nerve." It is worth considering whether these cases would not develop more to our taste if they were rather aided in their first faltering steps along the line of normal development.

9. INCEST.

This problem is traditionally ancient and uniformly the answer is negative. Both for psychic and biological reasons incest seems wholly objectionable. But these objections rest on the assumption that children will be born of such unions. In the absence of offspring it is difficult to take the problem very seriously. Of course, in breeding animals we compel incest in our efforts to obtain and fix certain qualities which we deem desirable. And while the result is usually an approach to our ideal animal, it will be admitted that it lacks vigor, it can not survive in open

competition with less inbred stock. With the human race we have the record of the Pharaohs, the Incas, and the polynesian royalty, where inbreeding *with a rigid elimination of the unfit* resulted in quite superior personalities. With our more civilized (!) tribes we are probably quite justified in making incest taboo, and that in spite of the tradition of Lot and his daughters. As a practical problem, we have seldom to deal with incest except in the case of the definitely feeble-minded with whom we were better to attack the problem from the angle of their mentality than of their conduct. Incest, between mother and son, father and daughter, or brother and sister (a not uncommon case in childhood though seldom persisted in later), where feeble-mindedness is not an issue, should be handled by the psychiatrist, if need be on orders from the court. But it seems unwise to make it a legal offense punished by any such unhelpful penalty as imprisonment. To make it a special sort of crime and to invest it with all those

immoral expressions of our own self-righteousness seems stupid and cruel. Let the indignant reader have the problem of brother and sister presented to him as a practical problem and one wonders whether he will give any very helpful advice. It is easy, though futile, to insist that the boy should leave all girls alone, but it will require quite a bit of patience to make clear the difference between the boy's sister and his chum's sister.

10. PREVENCEPTION.

While one becomes doubtful in these days of blind reaction, whether indeed there are any rights of any kind, nevertheless, one may be pardoned for suggesting that there probably are a few. And among those few rights, or vestiges of rights, I would predicate the right to the sexual control of the individual's own body. I admit that where procreation is involved the community has a right to intervene, but otherwise I believe even the "state" has nothing to say about it. The

fiction that the state can demand of women that they bear children will not long stand the test of either experience or logic. One admits readily enough that the community may properly require that the number of children be limited, and one can imagine the state urging that as many children be borne as can be properly cared for. But until the state sees to it that all children born are properly reared, fed, clothed, housed, and given equal chances at whatever education they desire, I can not imagine that the state has any right to insist that they be born. A walk through the slums and factories where children are allowed to develop in the most abominable surroundings is a sufficient reply to any pretensions that the state may make in its attempts to regulate these matters. The child has a right not to be born as well as to be well born. The mere fact that women can conceive without any desire to do so, is their anatomical misfortune. Not even the present liberal governments will undertake to require any male citizen

to beget children against his will, and for a most excellent reason. It is clear on our assumptions that woman has the same right even though she may not be protected by her anatomical construction as is the male. From what has gone before it is obvious that I regard the procreation of children as wholly a question of the woman's desire. Unless she so desires there are to be no children. It is also obvious from assumptions which regard the gratification of the sexual impulse as essential to healthy mental and physical development, that prevenience is not only desirable but a duty. With the lifting of the absurd ban which now rests on this subject we may expect the development of safe, esthetic methods which will make procreation truly voluntary and correspondingly ennobled.

11. ABORTION.

This is a misfortune, most undesirable, but not a crime. Whether or not a woman is to bear a child is her business and only

in a most indefinite way the affair of any one else. I can not recognize the right of the community to compel a woman to bear an unwelcome child. I do not see that the charge of murder has any valid application. Indeed the present stupid laws allow the destruction of a child whose further development would endanger the life of the mother. Nor does the state hesitate to slaughter adults who are thought to be antisocial, or millions of them, in war, and that without consulting them as to what they think about it. In the face of which it is difficult to see wherein the community has any claims on the unborn. I believe, therefore, that if the woman so desires, she may properly demand an abortion, and I shall not object.

On the other hand, I do not approve abortion and would make it unnecessary. It is clear that the abortion habit is undesirable from any point of view and we should make it the rare thing rather than the present underhanded custom. To the stock objection that prevenience and

abortion lead to race suicide it seems a sufficient answer that a race so given over to self-indulgence that the mother instinct is lost, or so miserable in its economic life that children are a disaster, can not perish too quickly from the face of the earth. The place to begin reforming is not with these poor maltreated women but with the economic system. Certainly it is taking a mean advantage of the helpless unborn to compel their entrance into a society as thoroughly rotten as these objections imply. Those women who do not want children will not rear a child properly, and the quicker their stock is eliminated, why—the better for those who adore the sanctity of motherhood. As a matter of fact we do not find many women in whom the maternal instinct is weak and I see no reason to worry about them. Since we can hardly hope to establish the custom of executing all childless women, say at the spring rutting festival as less civilized tribes might well do, it seems better to let them perish naturally.

12. PROSTITUTION.*

This ancient plague will disappear by becoming unnecessary, and in no other way. I was tempted to risk a bit of cheap cynicism and say—by becoming universal. For while that is not at all my idea, nor does it represent the probable development, yet to the orthodox, the sexophobes, those changes which will abolish prostitution will seem like the last days of Sodom and Gomorra. Nevertheless any person who takes the trouble to look up the history of this ancient profession, the various attempts to abolish it, and then look about him with sympathetic understanding will reach very much the conclusion offered above. As long as we try to confine a far from monogamous animal to a legal monogamy there will remain a surplus of sexual urge which will find satisfaction somewhere. Now just where is the

* It is quite an education for anyone to try to define the words prostitute and prostitution. They have not yet been defined in a satisfactory manner. I dodge the question as to what is the essence of prostitution.

point we had better start considering? The solutions attempted thus far have had only one purpose: to cripple and destroy the sexual impulse. The result is a deformed sexuality which whether we like it or not finds itself prepared to offer those inducements which produce commercialized prostitution as well as the clandestine variety. Even a slight acquaintance with Bloch's *Die Prostitution* will suffice to convince any reasonable person that all the effort, all the blood and cruelty which were spent in chivying poor whores from one jail to another, or from one slum to another, have not in any way altered the demand or the method of meeting it. One learns from Bloch's careful book that the profession has not changed appreciably since the beginnings of historic times. Even the slang is the same. The Romans called the lowest prostitutes *Denariæ* and we call them Jitneys. The part of the city where these persons settle has not changed. And the difference between ancient Rome and modern Gotham is mere-

ly one of language. The Romans had pimps, we have chauffeurs, and the reason our chauffeurs pimp is not that they prefer the occupation but because we pay them well for doing it, pay them better than for anything else they can do for us. Suppression, then, does not seem to me a hopeful way to proceed.

Admitting at once that I sincerely wish there were no prostitutes needed, honesty compels me to urge that we cease persecuting them. Of all the methods of regulation we have tried we have never tried treating the prostitute as a human being. We might try that. Give them the right of any other human being to live by his labor, cease this hypocritical social ostracism, and prostitution will change both its habitat and its habits. If the exploitation of these unfortunates which has its origin in their legal and social disabilities were eliminated the prostitute would largely disappear as a focus of disease and mother of the underworld. As far as I can see the only interest the state has in

the prostitute is to see that she does not spread disease; and the place to begin work is not with the prostitute but with her client. Free to live as other workers do she could not afford to be diseased, and she does not prefer to be so. As far as I know, prostitutes regard themselves as quite as honest laborers as their clients, nor do they look upon their life as more disreputable. That view has a good deal to be said for it. It is delightfully as well as tragically ironic to see the same men for whom the prostitute exists, solemnly making laws to abolish her. Nor does the prostitute fail to see the humor of it, painful as the results of such legislation may be to her in her personal fortunes.

Under present conditions, every effort is made to break down the prostitute's self-respect, to put her at a social and legal disadvantage for no other reason than that under such disabilities she is easier exploited by her fellow citizens. The result can only be degradation and an antisocial grudge which makes her wholly unwilling

to consider her social duties seriously. Give her the right over her own body, protect her from extortion and physical abuse and the prostitute would lose most of the sinister qualities which make her the tragic figure she has always been.

Such suggestions may seem extreme to those who have not considered the matter in its historical or human aspect. Nevertheless it is along some such path that we must move if we are not to be overwhelmed with the offal of our own iniquities. Suppressive measures have been tried, even the death penalty was invoked, and the result has been merely to make matters worse. On the other hand, a loosening of our too rigid limitations on the sex impulse as suggested in the preceding paragraphs will render the prostitute unnecessary and ultimately extinct, while there will grow up a regime based on the frank recognition of sexual necessity where men and women meet on a basis of comradeship and equality which leaves no need for the professional prostitute, but substitutes for

ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN 87

her the woman who gives freely when she loves and not at all otherwise. I am confident that in a generation of such freedom we would see not only the disappearance of the prostitute but the establishment of infinitely more happy homes, happy because coercion has no place in them, happy because they could only be maintained on a basis of mutual respect and thoughtfulness. Meanwhile if you can do nothing else, you can drop that dornick you have concealed under the folds of your toga. You have no right to throw it. Neither have I.

13. ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN.

One wonders at the limited understanding of those who assert that there can be anything holy or even serious about marriage except the possible children. And for folks to prate about their Christianity and of brotherhood, and then tolerate, nay, even defend our treatment of these unfortunate children, puzzles one as well as tempts to invective. I would not argue

with the theologues, but I can not recall in any version that the beautiful saying of Jesus: "Suffer the little children to come unto me" had also the qualifying clause; "that is, all who can show the duly certified marriage license of their parents." And indeed the church does not deny the possibility that an illegitimate child might enter into heaven even if it does tolerate conventions which make the bastard's life on earth very much like the other place.

There is a common notion that the grounds for the distinction between legitimate and "natural" children are to be found in religion. Everything to which the stigma of "sin" can be attached is supposed to originate in revelation, though the distinction with which we are here concerned has its origin and being in purely economic causes. It is not to violated sacraments, nor sin, but to economics that we owe this most unreasonable of iniquities. Naturally the laws were made by men for the usual purpose of escaping from the responsibilities for their passions.

ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN 89

And the women have aided and abetted this crime because they feared inroads upon the perquisites of their own usually legitimate offspring. I suppose the idea that there is religious justification for this persecution of the helpless arises from the quite definite notion of most folks that religion is chiefly concerned with persecution of one sort or another.

And of all the absurdities! It has even been necessary to gather statistics to prove that the illegitimate child was like any legitimate child. Mentally and physically they are like other children whether we would have it so or not. Spiritually they show in some measure, though really in surprisingly minor degree, rather less warm social feelings than others. That they are not violently anti-social is the only astonishing thing about them. When we consider the treatment which they receive one is amazed that they ever respond to social requirements. To be constantly shamed for what one can not help, to be sneered at, whispered about, to be always

the butt of those little social ostracisms which humanity so delights to inflict, as though one were somehow unclean: surely there are grounds enough to excuse quite a bit of resentment. And yet the statistics do not show that these children are any worse, judged by their court records, than legitimate children of the same economic environment.

Socially these poor kiddies are shown no mercy. I can still hear my schoolmates shrieking: "Bastard, bastard!" at a poor little girl huddled against that high-board school fence, crying her eyes out. Yes, and the children learned that attitude from the sneers of their elders! I further testify that that particular girl grew up, lived a somewhat promiscuous life until she married a saloonkeeper (she married young) and became one of the most competent mothers I have ever known. No, she did not repent and "get religion," she merely found some one whom she could love.

And so one is tempted to approve of

ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN 91

abortion, or even infanticide rather than permit a poor little baby to grow up to face the persecution which our Christian civilization will inflict upon it. Is it not strange that we do so cry out upon the illegitimate child and yet penalize the circulation of prevenience information? And Americans are such practical persons too.

I often wonder what folks mean when they say motherhood is sacred. Is it? And if it is what makes it so? For if the man can be induced, or forced, to marry the woman at any time before delivery, or even after, then is the child legitimate and everything is lovely. Does the sanctity of motherhood depend on the signing of papers which vary with every nation, state, and county? I have never known a County Clerk who seemed to me to be a particularly holy person, and I confess that administering the "sacrament" to the unwilling bridegroom at the point of a pistol seems to me a rather odd bit of ritual.

There are some signs of improvement.

The Scandinavian law which makes the father responsible is a step in the right direction. And the provision whereby in the absence of positive proof as to the actual father, all possible fathers are taxed pro rata is a wise way of eliminating that iniquitous defence used by men.

The problem is not at all concerned with the parents. The bastard is no worse off than the son of a widow. The State may well concentrate its attention on seeing to it that every child born receives an equal chance to develop into a healthy and wise human being. That is a task which the state can do something about. I am not afraid that the endowment of motherhood will be the signal for our women to plunge into a saturnalia of vice and indiscriminate breeding headed straight for the everlasting bonfire. The answer to that fear—commonest among men and childless women—is to hope that the timid objector might somehow be so transformed that he might bear just one child.

The only practical solution is the en-

dowment of motherhood. The State should see to it that every child born has equal opportunities to develop into the best possible citizen. For the rest we had better examine our ideas about the sanctity of motherhood and make sure that they are concerned as they should be with the environment of the mother and child instead of with mere scraps of paper I care not how many clerks' and ministers' signatures, or how many revenue stamps may be upon them.

14. THE HOME.

Whenever anyone goes about to suggest improvements in the relations between the sexes some misguided person is certain to reply that any change in our conventions will destroy the home. Now that would be a very real disaster if it were true. But I can not but wonder sometimes whether these champions of the home have really any idea of what a home is or what it ought to be. Certainly if they would analyze the influences now

working on the home, they would appear as crusaders in fields quite removed from sex. And I must also suspect that they are none too clear as to just what they are trying to save, nor perhaps always disinterested in their motives. The woman who is so deficient in self-respect that she marries a man merely for a meal-ticket and there are quite a few such, is naturally going to be dismayed at the suggestion of any change which would allow the misguided male to rid himself of a parasite. And there are several men who do not seem to be much interested in the "sanctity" of the home, if one may judge by their conduct with clandestine and other prostitutes, who develop a good deal of heat in defending the home—even though the thought is near that to such a man home is a place to sleep and eat and where he has one woman whom he need not treat with respect because she can not get free of him. I sometimes feel that the most violent defenders of "the home" are those who have little claim to have one. But all

of us, yes, even those who can propound any such doctrines as I have here suggested, are quite seriously concerned about the home, though not perhaps just the kind of home our opponents have in mind.

One needs very little of the results of study in child-psychology to see that the home is indeed the most important factor in a man's life. And with that in view one does not readily countenance the present status of the home, nor the age-old abuses which have crept into that hallowed institution. And the more one sees and studies the problem the more dismal appears the outlook for the institution as we cherish it in memory. A visit to any vaudeville house—and we have the very highest social precedent for frequenting them!—or a review of popular fiction or song should convince anyone that the home is rapidly falling into contempt. Not because radicals are preaching pernicious doctrines,—no worthy institution was ever hurt by an opposition doctrine,—but because the home has almost ceased to have any real

function in our industrial world. It seems to me that we are rapidly approaching, if indeed we have not already arrived at, the breakdown of the old ideals which we associated with the home. If this is true it is not the fault of agitators but of the home itself. And the forces which have brought this about are not primarily sexual nor will the cure be a matter of more stringent sex laws. That was tried in Rome—with what success we all know. It seems to me time to quit screaming for the police and take an inventory of the things which a home should contain and then see how much if any of these can be secured under present social conditions. It may happen that we will have to do our reforming with the social system rather than our sexual morality. It is not my intent to do more than indicate a few of the defects of the home and some reasons why I believe that an improved code of sexual ethics will not only not injure but will actually tend to foster good homes.

However much we may delude our-

selves as to the existence of homes in this country, I venture to assert that except in the rural district and in some villages the institution we have in mind when we sing "Home Sweet Home" has ceased to exist. The cause closely parallels that other good song, "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." With the ideal of the latter song I am sufficiently in agreement, but literally it is not altogether applicable. "Land where my fathers died;" well, no, not exactly. They didn't die out in Indiana, but over in the north of England and some perhaps lent aid and comfort to the enemy that is, to England during the Revolution. And some perhaps were hung for sheep stealing. I do not know this to be true, but it is entirely possible. In any event the phrase which is meant to awaken my patriotic ardor by an appeal to my fathers does not seem to fit the case. There must be several other American citizens who feel the same way about it.

Now in a quite similar way Home Sweet Home refers to the family homestead, the

old place which has always been the seat of the family, and not by any stretch of imagination to apartment 666 in the Fly-bynight Apartment House; or was it a few rooms over a feed store which you, gentle reader, are expected to enthuse over? In other words, the home in the sense that it gives an idea of permanence, a place where the individual has roots firmly inbedded in the soil, is no longer extant and has not been for some time. Ownership and permanence are fundamental to the homing instinct. This fact is curiously borne out by Healy's studies of delinquent children, where frequent change of residence is an appreciable factor in so breaking up the child's emotional roots as to leave him really a wanderer. And for ourselves, not yet delinquent perhaps, there is no *place* to which we can look back with any great affection. We may have been very happy in our parents, but that is the only tie. We did not grow up naturally among friends, we shifted our friends with each remove and ultimately

came to rely mostly upon ourselves since the ties which long friendship establishes had no opportunity to form.

Then too, there are other directions in which our economic system has broken down that group of associations which are a part of the "home." There was a time when mother and the girls wove the cloth from wool from my sheep and made it into my Sunday suit. I do not desire to revert to homespun, but please note that there is a difference between such a suit and one purchased at a bargain sale. And it matters quite a bit whether mother prepared that special dish of which I was so childishly fond, or whether the hired girl made it. And in how many modern homes, especially in the city, is a child turned over to a negro nurse (not infrequently syphilized at that), while mother attends her social duties? Or, if mother works, the children must be farmed out at a day nursery or on the street. Now I am far from asserting that the more primitive and therefore presumably more natural negro

girl is not as good a nurse as many mothers, but the fact is that the child's earliest associations and by far the most important ones are developed around a girl of alien race.

Every school teacher knows that she is expected to teach not only the three Rs, but also etiquette, morals, and keep the children herded out of mother's way. And in return the teacher receives perhaps less than janitor's wages! As one teacher shrewdly remarked after a meeting of the "Home and School Association:" "It does not seem to occur to any of these people that the home also has duties." It is amazing what proposals are brought before these meetings. And so one might go on to show the innumerable ways in which our vicious economic system has disintegrated the home. It will be found that it is not laxity of morals, nor irreverence, but mere economic necessity which has taken everything out of the home but the parents, and in the case of the less successful both parents and children are dragged out

and chained to the wheels of industry. The levity which so alarms the pious is not a cause but a symptom and if they would sincerely undertake to improve matters they would do better to worry less about their neighbor's peccadilloes and more about their own unearned incomes. For the wife who does not work, but has a maid do it all, is in a rather weak position in such an argument, quite as is the man who produces nothing but grafts his living off exchange in one form or another.

It seems improbable that any good can come from a panic stricken flight towards the old Puritan household. Nor can we expect repressive legislation to help. If we really wish to do anything about it we will have to decide what constitutes a home, and how much of that can be obtained from men and women who are politically and economically equals and free. For the future belongs to just such persons and force will help us not a bit. We face the questions: What is a proper home? How can we best secure such?

How can we maintain them once they are established?

As to the last question, we have so far followed the ancient error in supposing that if the parents were definitely chained together a home would result. Unfortunately it is more often a hell. It should be clear that the direction of progress—some will call it degeneration, but for all that it is the direction we are going and will continue to go—lies toward complete freedom of the pair to separate. We are going to cease requiring that people who merely desire each other's society must chain themselves permanently together. We are going to cease leaving the question of children entirely to chance and ignorance. We will insist, that unless the pair in question wish children they shall not have them. It is the undesired child which is deserted; where children are desired the parents will stand by without compulsion.

And so the answer to the second question seems to me to lie in allowing much greater freedom of choice than is now pos-

sible and more opportunity for attendance at the only school in which we mortals ever learn anything—that of trial and error and trial again. First let us be sure the pair can really tolerate each other. Then if they desire children let the community see to it that such children have a real chance to survive. That means that food, shelter, and opportunities for both education and play must be assured to each person in the community. The result will be happy homes, the goal sought.

One hears a good deal about the unwillingness of the modern woman to bear children. Such talk is rank nonsense. There are women who do not wish children, and we put a premium on them by giving them rewards which the maternal type of woman is denied. But because such childless women are always rather noisily “among those present” does not mean that the maternal instinct has died out. And we ought to realize that the present economic system by making children a disaster rather than an asset is cer-

tainly not encouraging parenthood in either sex. Any physician knows that the urge toward motherhood is the most vigorous and awe-inspiring impulse with which he comes in contact. When we see to what lengths women will go, what tortures they will endure in order to have children of their own, a real man steps reverently aside and allows the woman to decide whether, when, and to whom she shall bear children. There is nothing like it in the male psyche and those who have any realization of the actual facts are not worried about the decay of the mother instinct. What does worry him is the fact that children born have so little chance of a healthy rearing.

And it is also probably true of those relatively rare women who "hate children" that it is our own fault they are so deformed. In our panicky efforts to keep our girls "pure" until marriage and that at an age far beyond that which nature carelessly set for the event, we instill into the girl's mind the blasphemous ideas that

sex is filthy, nasty, unfit for a girl to know about. And in extreme pathological cases even the baby is hated because it is associated with "horrid sex" practices. That may be purity, but if so: "Come down and redeem us from virtue!" And even in the average case our miseducation makes it almost impossible for the woman to view sex naturally and reverently, to be approached with joyous enthusiasm. Would it perhaps be better if we taught our children of both sexes to look upon the impulse naturally, for what it is, and to exercise it with the same honest enthusiasm with which we take food?

Of course, when we look about us at the cynical sensual faces of our fellows we wonder just how much capacity and understanding they may have for the ideals and beauties of this tremendous impulse. And we invariably conclude that while we ourselves would do very well, any change in our present restrictive code would evoke a saturnalia of vice. I believe this conclusion is fundamentally false. No man will

abandon a mate who meets his requirements, nor will a woman desert a competent husband. If we are degraded it is because we have tried to kill, not to educate this impulse. Every normal man wants a mate, home, and children, and is indeed driven to try for them even under the present conditions. But how we can expect this to take place successfully under our present laws which stake all upon a chance meeting is beyond my understanding. Neither partner knows exactly what he wants until afterwards and we, as if to make sure of failure, carefully miseducate both parties. It may be a very shocking idea, perhaps, but one wonders if it would improve matters if we made adolescence, what it naturally is, the time for trying out mates and for finding one's self. Given proper preventive methods, and an education which emphasized the nobility of the sex impulse, it is not impossible that such a try-out period would result in an enormously greater number of happy homes, not because the

laws chained them together, but because they loved one another—a rather stronger bond. In fact a similar condition did obtain among our more primitive ancestors, and vestiges of it are still to be found in Great Britain and less “civilized” parts of Europe. Not that I would counsel any fond parent to put this idea into practice just now, since the girl would be ostracized and subjected to a continuous process of degradation by her more virtuous (masturbating?) sisters. And why will she be thus cast out and degraded? Because she has sinned? Certainly not. The reason is simply that if her self-respect can be broken down men can easily exploit her necessities for the benefit of their selfish lusts, avoiding thereby any responsibility. And the women will foolishly abet them in this hideous cruelty. But it should be remembered that this cruelty results from quite other reasons than the total depravity of the human heart. Among others it rests upon the attempt to make men monogamous by law rather than by love.

However, whether such a mating season will come back again is rather beyond our present possible actions, and yet is worth several thoughts while we are looking for methods of saving the home.

CONCLUSION.

Looking over what I have written I fear I will be suspected of advocating an utterly anarchic sexual life; yet that is not my idea at all. I do feel that we are much too bound by convention and not half enough guided by conscious knowledge. It seems that a great deal more experience and freedom to experiment is needed if we are ever to approach our ideal of a sane healthy love life and of a real home fit for children to be born into. We have so long been blundering around in the valley of ignorance dragging the shackles of a perverted eroticism, instead of educating it, that I feel that a great deal more freedom will be needed before any improvement can occur. I really believe in a home finer than any we have yet

achieved because it will be based upon a conscious and illuminated love life. I can not believe these ideals can be achieved under conventions which rest upon an ascetic defiance of the natural laws, upon property rights, and upon the malice and meannesses which our ignorance stimulates.

I believe these things which we desire can be had only in a state of complete freedom and equality of both sexes, not only socially but psychically. I demand a relation where each cherishes the other because he wishes to and where impertinence and imposition are impossible. And if this is to be attempted, we must elevate—or degrade, if you prefer—our standards of judgment so that mere physical contacts are not the sole criteria of excellence. We should teach the young of both sexes to respect this impulse, instead of smirching it. And then we should set them free to make their lives as nearly worthy as they may be able.

As to the law, the State: I believe that

the less it meddles with emotional matters the better. It will be doing very well if it concerns itself with the unsolved problem of economic justice. The spirit will do its part if the living conditions are not made the intolerable cut-throat game we now tolerate.

Nor do I fear that removing the present restrictive laws will initiate an orgy of licentiousness which will destroy our civilization. Parenthetically I must ask whether any one is so very sure our civilization is really worth preserving. I am open on this point, but I confess that I would rather not have to defend the affirmative thesis. What does concern us is that straitjacket methods have not produced anything worthy or beautiful unless we are to assume that stoning prophets is the most desirable form of spiritual propaganda. For the ideals we seek grow from within outward in response to the warm spiritual rays of the sun of love. They can not be implanted or cultivated

by force and coercion. For as long as we are hungry, as long as we are envious, these ideals can exist only as mocking shadows.

THE END

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